# A SERMON

## on the Parable of the Sower, taken out of the 13. of Matthew.

*Preached at London by M. G. Gifford, and published at the request of sundry godly and well disposed persons.*

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# TO THE RIGHT

worshipfull, M. *Iohn Hutton* Esquire,

George Gifford wisheth health and increase of worship.

IT is more then halfe a yeere (Right worshipfull) since I handled this Parable of the Sower, in a Sermon at London. Being instantly vrged by a friend which heard me, to put it in writing, although I was very vnwilling, for sundry considerations, yet I made some promise if leasure should serue. Afterward when I would very gladly haue bene released at her hands, whom I promised, I could by no meanes obteine it. I haue therefore at the last so nigh as I could, set downe in writing, that which I then vttered in speaking, I knowe that I haue omitted some things in the particular applications, and exhortations which I made: and also I haue added somewhat which either thé came not to minde, or els time did not serue to handle. I am bolde to present and dedicate this my poore trauell vnto your worship, moued thereto with diuers respects as thinking my selfe in duetie bounde,

not onely with this common and generall bonde that yee are one which long time haue professed the glorious Gospel of Iesus Christ: but with diuers more speciall, which are so well knowen vnto you, that it were needeleſſe for me to recite them: onely thus much, seeing I was borne & brought vp vnder you, my Parents receiuing benefits daily from you, I thinke I ought, when as I am not able to make any recompéce, at least to shew some token of a gratefull minde. But especially I am moued hereunto, with consideration of the greatest blessing which all my kinred haue enioyed by you now so long, in prouiding and procuring their spirituall instruction. I pray you accept of my good wil, and account of mee as one that prayeth to the Lorde for you, that he wil multiply and increase his good gifts still in you, to the glorie of his holy name, the benefitte of his Church, and your endeleſſe comforte in Iesus Christ, Amen.

Yours for euer to commaund in the Lord.

*George Gifford.*

# A SERMON VPON THE Parable of the Sower.

*Mat.* 13.

1 IN that day Iesus went out of the houſe, and ſate by the Sea ſide.
2 And there was gathered vnto him a multitude, ſo that he entred into a ſhippe, & ſate down, and the whole multitude ſtoode on the ſhoare.
3 And he ſpake many things vnto thē by Parables, ſaying: *Behold* a Sower went foorth to ſowe.
4 And as he ſowed, ſome ſeedes fell by the way ſide: and the foules came, and eate them vp.
5 Other fel vpon ſtony ground, where they had not much earth, and by & by they ſprang vp, becauſe they had not depth of earth.
6 And when the Sun roſe, they were parched, and becauſe they had no roote, they withered.
7 Other fell among thornes, and the thornes grew vp and choked it.
8 Other fell into good ground, and brought foorth fruite, one ſeede an hundreth folde, another ſixtie, another thirtie.

9 He that hath eares to heare, let him heare.

ALthough the Iewes, at suche time as our Sauiour Christ came into the worlde, had the worde of God among them: and had also the temple and Synagogues where they heard ỳ same reade and expounded: yet their state was very miserable, for Christ saith, they were as sheepe without a shepheard: because their teachers, the Scribes & Phariſies, being choaked with couetouſneſſe, & puffed vp with vaine glorie, were become ſtarke naught, corrupt in manners, and corrupting the word with their fond gloſes: their teaching alſo was ſo cold, and with ſo little power euen in that which they taught truely, that the people had no great liſt to heare them. But when Iohn Baptiſt the forerunner of Christ, was raiſed vp to publiſhe the beginning of the Goſpell, and to prepare the way for the Lorde: hee like a ſounding and ſhril Trumpet, with the power of his word ſhooke their hearts, and rowſed their drowſines, ſo that from his time the kingdome

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of heauen suffred violence. When Christ Iesus him selfe vttered his voice in preaching, and his diuine power in working wonders, there appeared such a wonderfull maiestie in his person, as did amaze the hearers: whereupon his fame was noysed far and nere, so that they came running out of all quarters of the land by heapes, for to see and heare him, they seemed to forget themselues and their state, in leauing all worldly affaires, as the husbandmen their plough, the Artificers their crafts and sciences, following him into the wildernes with their wiues and their children laggering at their heeles, so great was their zeale. So that, as before almost all did perishe in that miserable state they were in: now it seemed that the greatest part, or at lest an innumerable multitude did with such care imbrace the heauenly doctrine, as that they should be most happy and come to eternal life: but this was otherwise, for our sauiour Christ sheweth heere, ỹ of this great heape & rablement of people, ỹ were so zealous, and trauelled so far to heare him, there were three partes which did not profit by his doctrine but continued still damned & forlorne crea-

sures, onely one part of foure, are true schollers. And because we be ranke hypocrites, prone & redy to deceiue our selues, Christ Iesus layeth open the matter so plainly, and in so familiar a kinde of teaching, that vnlesse we wilfully blinde our selues, we cannot but see holy the case standeth in euery of vs, each man in himselfe: for he taketh a similitude from a Sower of corne, which going and casting his seede abroad, it lighteth vpon sundry kindes of ground, some falleth by the way side, where the path is trampled and beaten smoothe, and harde by mens feete, and is made like a pauement, and there it lyeth aboue the ground altogether vncouered, the Foules come by and by and pick it vp.

Some falleth into stony grounde, or rockie, or as S. Luke saith, vpon a roke: where there is a litle thinne crust of earth in the top, and some moisture in which the seede is a litle couered, & because the earth which dooth couer it is but shallowe, it springeth vp quickly and branches, and is fresh and greene, and being so good, seemeth to be forward corne, and such as would yeld to the Husbandman a plentifull Haruest;

but

but because the roote can not spreade it selfe deepe enough to sucke iuyce out of the ground for the nourishment of the blade, when the parching heate of the Sun lighteth vpon it, then it is dryed vp, and scorched, and dyeth, and neuer bringeth forth fruite. Some other doth fall among thornes: there is deapth of earth for the seede to grow, so that it springeth vp, and not onely a blade, but also a stalke, and commeth so farre as to haue the eare: but the thornes growe vp with it, ouershadowe and choake it, in so much that the Corne in the eare, can not haue the benefit of the Sunne to make it ripe: therefore the fruit that it seemeth to bring forth commeth to naught. Some other seedes fall into good ground, and grow vp, and bring forth seasonable fruite, one kernell an hundreth, another sixtie, another thirtie. This is the Parable. Now for the meaning of it, wee are not to seeke farre, neither to goe by coniectures, for Christ him selfe doth expounde and interprete euery part of it a litle after this Chapter: I neede not but to lay open his exposition.

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The sæde is the worde of God: the sower of it is the Preacher and publysher of the same: for as the Sower doth fill his hande and so casteth it abroade vppon the grounde, not letting it sæde by sæde, or chosing a place for euerie sæde, but where it lighteth: euen so the preacher doth cast forth the worde among the people, and loke howe the grounde is into which it falleth, so doeth it prosper: for your heartes are the grounde vppon which it is caste: you that are the hearers and amonge whome the sæde is sowen, haue euerie one a hearte which is one of these foure sortes of grounde, vppon which the sæde falleth: and because the sæde hath bæn and is still daily sowen among ye, I thinke this parcell of Scripture is verie fit and agreeable, euen as a touchstone for euerie one to trye him selfe withall, whether hee haue rightly embraced the Gospell, and to his saluation: for what a sottishnesse were this, when we haue so iust and plaine a rule, not to measure our selues with it. But going on, on, nothing consider whether wee bee not one of those three euill sortes of grounde, which receiue the

sæde,

ſéede, but bring forth no fruite, thinking wee be well if wee profeſſe the Goſpell or heare it, after any ſorte. Let vs goe forwarde: thoſe which receiue the ſéede by the way ſide, are they which heare the worde and do not vnderſtande it, then commeth the euill one, or as Saint Luke ſayeth, the Deuill, and taketh it away from their heart. In theſe firſt kinde of hearers, wee haue to obſerue, howe that their heartes being hard and ſmoth lyke a path that is trampled and beaten with mens féete the word hath no entrance, but lyeth aboue vncouered: for lyke as when a man caſteth an handfull of corne vpon a very hard and ſmoth path, it is all one as if it were caſte vpon a pauement: ſo alſo through the cuſtome and deceitfulnes of ſinning, the deuil hath made the hearts of theſe vnméete to receiue the heauenly ſéede of the word: and loke how ye ſée Crowes & other foules follow the héeles of the Sower, to picke vp and deuoure ſuch karnels as do lye vncouered: in like maner do the deuils come lyke grédy foules into the aſſemblies, where the word of God is preached, to take it away from the heartes of the

people

people that it may not growe there. This peraduenture will seeme straunge to some, that Satan should haue any entrance into the Church among Gods people, specially when they bee about the best and most holy exercises of hearing the worde and of prayer. How strange so euer it may seeme, and how many soeuer haue beene, or bee of that fonde and doltish opinion, to thinke that the diuell hath nothing to doe with them, or commeth not neere them, when they bee aboute these holy thinges: wee are to beleeue Christ who telleth vs the contrarie: and wee are wisely to consider, that when wee are nighest that which should do our soules good, then is this enimie readiest at hand, and doth most busily bestirre him. If this were not vttered by our Sauiour Christ him selfe, wee might wonder, and for mine owne part I would not cease wondering to see many hearers which carry away almost nothing which is to any purpose: let a man tell a long story in a worldly matter, they haue witte enough to recite it in order againe, and to keepe it in remembrance

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a longe time after: but let the preacher speake neuer so plaine, although they sit and looke him in the face, yet if ye enquire of them so soone as they bee out at the Church dores, ye shall easily perceyue that (as the common saying is) it went in at the one eare, and out at the other. They will say peraduenture, after this maner, it was a good Sermon, I woulde wee coulde follow it, hee saide very well: hee is a perfecte readie man in the Pulpet. But aske, what doctrine did hee handle: Then are they at a pause, and set at a dead lift. They will make this answere: wee are not able to carry away so much as other can, neuertheless wee hope that wee bee as good towarde God, as they that carry away most. They will also confesse that the worde of God is good, and that wee shoulde bee ruled by it. Let vs therefore dearely beloued, (if wee desire not to bee of the number of these) marke well the subtill sleightes, and policie of the Diuell, how hee handleth and conueyeth the matter with this kinde of people. There is no doubte of this, but that if hee can hee will dryue away the

minde

minde from comming to the Sermon, one pelting lette or other muste come in the waye: if there bee no worldly busi-nesse to bee done: then a paire of cardes or tables or some honest recreation, it should bee nowe no good ciuilitie to part companye when frendes are met toge-ther, this is the sureste waye if it maye bee obtained: but what if hee faile here-in? They come to the place where the seede shalbe sowen, sit downe, and minde to heare: then the next way is to come with them, and to attende at their elboe, seeking how to depriue them of the worde. Nowe his best way is to bring them a-sleepe becausse they were then as good bee absent: or into a slumber, that they may heare onely a sounde and aconfused hum-mung, without any perseuerance of the thinges vttered: or els when they heare any perfect sentence, or a fewe sentences, they know not why they bee vttered, be-cause they heard not that which went be-fore. Such as are not so drouske headed, being wakefull, hee seeketh still to conuey some thoughtes into their mindes, where-aboutes they may bee occupied, and their

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vnderstanding drawen away: the minde of a man beeing light and inconstant, if hee can put in but one motion, it oftentimes draweth with it so manye linkes as make vp a whole chaine, in the meane time the Preacher goeth on, and he vnderstandeth not what was saide, and so when his mind returneth, he can haue no sounde knowledge of the thinges vttered, but a confused opinion: into these by thoughtes, men are oftentimes brought, euen by occasion of some worde or sentence which they heard vttered, and are caried so farre, that they can not of long time recouer their minde to bring it againe to the matter. Seeing this greate daunger, we ought when wee come to heare Gods worde taught, to make account that we goe about a very hard worke, that we goe to encounter with satan hand to hand, who seeketh then most busily to steale away our hart: that he may make that worde fruetles in vs, & cause vs to sin greeuously against God. There is no one man which maketh conscience of hearing ỹ worde rightly, which letting these thinges together, the reuerence we owe vnto it, the stedines of our minde,

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which shoulde be vpon it, and the care to keepe it, but will easily graunt that it is as hard and painefull a trauell to doo this, as for the man that worketh in the forest bodily labour. Here is therefore a lesson for euery man to applye to himselfe when hee is going to heare the worde, to thinke I am nowe going about a great worke, I shall bee too weake if the Lorde God doo not mightely assist mee: for I am not to sitte downe there at ease, but to wrestle and struggle with the Diuel, and with all the corruptions of mine owne fleshe, and hardenesse of my heart: that my minde may bee kept stedfast vpon the worde, that I may receyue it with all reuerence and feare, as the woorde of the great and glorious God: not to iudge of it at mine owne pleasure, but to craue wisedome from the Lorde: not to heare it and to let it goe, but to keepe it as a most pretious Jewell locked vp in my heart, that I my guyde my selfe thereby. And we shall be a great deale the rather moued to this diligence, if wee consider what a companion wee carry about with vs, and what a guest wee lodge withall

wofull; when wee bee such as heare the word, and do not keepe it. For Christ telleth vs that it is the deuill which doth this: whiche as a greedy Fowle deuoureth the seede which was sowen in our heart: if any make none account to haue him possessing their minde, and hardning their hearts against the word: then let them continue in their sloth to heare with drowsie mindes, to heare and not to vnderstand: to regard the holy word, but as the word of a man: to make little account to keepe it. But if hee thinke it a most miserable thing to haue so filthie a beast, and so foule a spirit to lodge in his brest: if hee thinke it to be a most vile slauery, to be vanquished and ouercome of so horrible an enemy, to be lead captiue and kept thrall vnder such a tyrant: then let him thinke also howe miserable a thing it is to be such a kinde of ground as doth receiue the seede by the way side: for vndoubtedly howsoeuer men seeme to defy the deuill, and curse him as though hee should not come nigh them, yet seeing it is no mortall man but the Lorde Jesus Christ him selfe, who telleth vs here that

the diuell is not onely nigh, but in these kinde of hearers, euen hardening their heartes, and blinding their eyes, we ought most constantly to beleeue it. Hee that shal deepely weigh the estate of our Church at this day, will soone bee brought to confesse, that there bee many of this first sorte of hearers, they shall perceyue it right well by this, that they are not able in any wise to iudge or put difference between sound & sincere preaching, and vaine pratling: they know not when the Preacher doth minister vnto them wholesome foode, and when there is nothing but chaffe and winde: yee shall heare them highly commend some Sermon, as a matter worthy to bee written in letters of golde, when as in deede it deserueth not so much as to be noted with a coale. I speake not of these sily wretches, which were neuer as yet acquainted with preaching, for it is no great maruell, though they bee not able to discerne chalke from cheese: or being blinde to iudge of colours, but to such as long time haue beene hearers, and yet neuer the wiser, because they are not able to iudge when sound and necessarie

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conclusions are drawne out of the worde: but is all one with them, whether the reason that is made be good or bad, strong or weake: yea further yee shall perceyue that euen a litle shew of a reason although neuer so doltish, being against true godlinesse, doth more preuaile with them, then a multitude of infallible proofes, although they bee neuer so sure: and that which is so grosse and absurd that a childe may laugh at, seemeth to them a veris strong piller to leane to. There needeth no more when a man preacheth vnto them, but a glorious shew of learning, a sweete ringing voyce, & matters so strange and straungely handled, that they may bee brought into a wonderment of that they know not. And Satan hath many chaplaines fit for this turne, to serue the vaine humor of such people, and to set foorth themselues after a pompous sort: more seeking their owne vaine glory, then the glory of the Gospell, in the conuersion of the people. The second kinde of grounde are they which receyue the seede vpon the harde rocke, where there is some entrance, and the word hath a shallow root in them, for as

it were the top of their heart is soft after a sort, and there it is couered a litle, and it groweth vp quickly, and springeth fresh, they seeme to be stout and excellent professours, they brag of great zeale: a man would take them to be sincere, and so they take them selues: but when the Sun ariseth, that is, the firie triall or parching heat of persecution, they stumble and fall away, and because the word had no deepe roote in them, it withereth and bringeth forth no fruite: these also are not profited by the worde of grace, but are still castawayes and damned creatures: in this kinde of grounde, or in these hearers, if wee note well, we shall see that which is straunge and wonderfull: when Christ sayth and testifieth of them, that they receiue the worde with ioy: these be not blasphemers or persecutors of the worde: they bee not contemners which regarde not at all to heare it: they come not vnder a shewe or pretence as to a thing which otherwise they haue no care nor feeling of, or which they delight not for to heare, but how? They receiue it with ioy, and take such pleasure therein, that re-

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turning they can say, surely this was a verie notable peece of worke, and well handeled, I am glad that I heard it, it doeth mee euen as much good as my meate, I would goe a mile to heare the like againe. Is not this then merueylous and fearefull, that a man may goe thus far, and yet be a castaway, and a forlorne wretch? It is not a thing to bee wondered at, when the holie scriptures giue sentence against those traiterous villaines, which set themselues against God, and treade downe his lawes: but when God vttereth this sharpe sentence agaynst this zealous kinde of men, if it cause vs not to wonder, yet it may make vs to tremble, when we see that a man may proceede thus farre in religion and yet be damned. When we vnderstand that a man may be zealous, & ready to hear preaching, vnderstandeth, carrieth away, letteth it growe in his heart, hath some ioy in it, and yet neuer the better, abiding still vnder the curse. But there be some which will obiect against me and say, this is no good maner of teaching, for the vse of true teaching, is to builde vp and edifie the faith: but this seemeth to take away

the certaintie of faith from all, so that no man can tell whether hee shall bee saued: For by what meanes can a man make a better tryall and proofe of his faith then this, that he giueth eare to Gods worde, vnderstandeth it, carryeth it away, and ioyeth in it? If such a man may bee damned, who may not despaire? I answere with S. Paule. 1. Cor. 10. 12. He that thinketh he standeth, let him take heede hee doo not fall. If the admonition were necessary to the Corinthes, it is necessarie for vs all. One of that principall endes and vses of preaching, is to giue men warning that they do not deceiue them selues with euery kinde of faith or ioy in the worde: but to looke for good and sound tryall in them selues: which is not the way to bring men to dispaire, but to bring them to true godlinesse: to cause them to shake off securitie and loosnesse in the seruice of God: to beware least their hartes bee hard still within: it causeth men to try them selues least they should be deceyued by a vaine shadow of a dead and fruitlesse faith: For Christ saith, that these beleeue (for so it is expressed by S. Luke the 8. 13.) and ioy in

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the worde, and yet are damned. Then let vs come to the particular applying of this point: to see how wee are to deale with our selues, when ye receaue the worde take heede that ye giue it deapth of earth enough, looke that your hearte bee not soft and pliable enough a litle aboue, and a hard rocke of stone within, but see that it bee digged and softened to the bottome, that the worde may take roote deepe enough. Alas, what a miserable thing is it, when Christ hath giuen vs warning heere so plainely, for a man to bee a zealous gospeller, not onely willing to heare, but hath an earnest desire, and trauaileth to heare, taketh pleasure and delight when hee heareth, yet neuertheleſſe, because hee taketh no heede thereto, his heart within is so stony, that he heareth but to his further increase of damnation. Many thinke it goeth well with them when as they receyue this testimonie from men: hee is a sounde Protestant, he fauoureth and delighteth in the truth, these in deede be greate tokens of the feare of God, but yet we are not to reſt in them: our chiefe dealing is betweene God and our heart, that in this thing whether

our heart be not harde and rockie. Thole are a thoulande times happie, which haue melting heartes and ſoft affections, ſo that Gods woorde doeth pearce into them, and cauſeth them to tremble at the maieſtye and power of the ſame: their tender heart doeth ſigh and mourne for their iniquitie. As on the contrarie part, they which make no conſcience of ſinne, but are hardened in their affections, although they ſeeme to bee in good caſe, yet are they curſed and miſerable. Let euery man therefore that goeth from the Sermon, carry this with him: I heare by Chriſtes owne woords, that there is a ſtony ground where the ſeede falleth: where it groweth but not deepe inough, it ſpringeth vp but doeth not bring forth fruit, this is a woefull caſe, if I ſhould be in the number of theſe for then all my labour is loſt, whiche I beſtowe in frequenting Sermons, yea, it were much better that I had neuer heard: I feele that I ioye in it, I would not for any thing but I had heard it: but Chriſt ſaieth that the reprobate, ſome of them doo heare the woord with ioy, ſo that if I looke not narrowly to mine owne heart,

I may for all this bee damned: therefore I muste not satisfie my selfe with this, but see that I couer the worde deepe inough, that my heart bee softened in such sort, that I feele the rote gosth deepe, yea, so deepe, that it can neuer be rooted out: And therefore let him continually cry vnto God and say: O Lorde make soft my hard and stonie heart, let it be a melting heart, that thy holie worde may growe in it for euer. I woulde to GOD, this doctrine of our Sauiour Christ, might make euerie of vs to tremble and shake (as indeede if it were well weighed, it is so fearefull, that it might cause the haire of our heades to stand vp) for then would wee not so lose-lie and securelie walke in the hardnes of our heartes, there would not bee so manye backsliders in time of persecution: there woulde not bee so manye braue boasters and praters of Religion, who are readie to pull in their hornes, and to hide their heades, so soone as there is anye feare of daunger, or lykelyhood of persecution: neyther would men beare themselues in hand, that they be iolly Profes-

lors, when they haue but a litle tasted of the worde, and are no more but emptie barrels, which giue a greate sounde. Here then wee be set a worke with great toyle, to haue this same hard stony ground made soft, and fit to receyue this heauenly seede. And hee which is not carefull in this point, to take paines, yes shall see him ware so harde, that euen as a continuall raine dropping vpon a Rocke of stone maketh it neuer the softer, so nothing can make his heart to relent. This may teach vs then to cease marueiling, when we see so many which willingly giue themselues to bee taught, and haue still litle remorse of sinne.

The Lord for his mercy sake make vs wise and sharpe sighted to iudge of our selues: not to bee leade on forwarde in a carnall profession, but to giue credite to our heauenly teacher, who hath heere opened his holy mouth to instructe vs so plainely, and before hand to warne vs of the great daunger: that wee may stirre vp our selues, and bee quickened in our dull spirites, with all humble submission, and bowing downe our neckes, to re-

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ceiue the doctrine of our Lorde, and so open our heartes in such sorte that hee may digge in them, and thrust in his spade to the bottome. For otherwise, it can not goe well with vs. If this were practised among vs, wee shoulde not haue so many olde rustie Protestantes: whith if a man talke with them from morning to night, they are able to continue speach in reciting stories and places of Scripture, and will vtter matter against the doctrine of the Pope: but let a man vrge them with the doctrine of regeneration, and stand vpon the necessitie of sincere Repentance, shewing them that they must be truly humbled vnder the burthen of their sinnes, that theyn ust mortifie and subdue their carnal lustes: this is too harde a crust for their olde teeth. This matter doth marre all: this doth robbe them of their glory: and therefore they can not willingly abide to heare of it.

Let vs come now to the thirde kinde of grounde, which receyueth the seede among the thornes: here is depth enough of earth: so that as the second sorte of hearers seemed to goe farre beyond the first,

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so these seeme to goe farre beyond them, and to come nigher to eternall life, for heere the word doth grow and hath roote so deepe, that it springeth forth so faire, that Christ saieth, it groweth vp, and the thornes grow vp with it, the stalke doth shoote forth the eare, and lacketh but riping. For this may bee proued by Saint Luke, who saieth that they bee not (Telesphorountes) that is, suche as beare ripe and timely fruite: for these professors doo manye good workes, and seeme to bring forth the fruites of the Gospell: and that in suche wise that men can not alwayes discerne them, but thinke their deedes to bee notable: but Christe Iesus doth shewe that their workes before God, (who onely cannot bee deceiued) are as Corne which lacketh riping, which beeing ouershadowed with bushes, withereth in the eare and commeth to naught: this is a daungerous case if wee looke not to it: That a man maye heare the Gospell preached, carrie it away, bee moued thereby to doo manie good workes: and yet bee damned. Hee is a thousande folde madde therefore, which doeth not

looke

loke to him selfe in this point: to trie what soundnes there is in the fruites of his faith, and how sincerely he doeth imbrace Gods word. As before I saide, that some would obiect and say, this will destroy the faith, so am I sure that here it will be saide much more: because this seemeth to take away the surest triall of faith: if a man may not by and by say, I haue good workes, therefore I haue the true and liuely faith: I answere, that whosoeuer hath any good worke in him, the same hath the true faith, which hath brought forth that good worke, because it is impossible without faith to do any good thing, or to haue any good motion or intent: but withall I saye, that it is one thing to seeme good before men, and another thing for to bee good in deede before God. In outwarde appearaunce, there is little difference betweene the good deedes of them which feare God sincerely, and the vntimely fruite of worldlinges: but God whose eye doth not loke vpon the outward shewe, but the inward affection, seeth which proceedeth of fayth, and which doth proceede of vaine glorie,

or some other sinister respect, and putteth a great difference betweene them, as hee did betweene the sacrifices of Cayne and Abell. We must take heede then, that the fruites of our faith bee ripe and timely, otherwise they be good but in shew. Wee must come then to see first what these thornes are: in S. Matthew they are called, the cares of this world and the deceitfulnes of riches: In S. Luke: the cares of riches, and pleasures of this life. And in very deede, these thornes do grow together. For were it not for the pleasures of this life, there would be no cares of riches: hee which doth seeke greedely for wealth, it is either because hee would bee able to haue wherewithall to fill the lustes of the flesh, and to pamper his body delicately: or els to set forth himselfe in pryde, and to clyme ambitiously to honour. For so long as a man doth take pleasure in any of these, so long hee is couetous and raketh together so much, that as the common saying is, hee raketh vp the Diuell and all. What must we doo then? Our hearles are as a ground that is ranke, and bringeth foorth many weedes: we are set a worke as God

spea-

hath life: hee which will not continually till and weede this ground, may well haue the Gospell in some sorte for to grow in him, but not to saue him. Dearely beloued wee must bee surely perswaded of this, that as there bee manie godly men, to they haue attained it with great labour and toyle, yea, they are still set a worke and can not come to an ende, because theese thornes can not bee vtterly rooted out.

Those are greatly ouerseene which thinke it to bee an easie thing to professe Christ vnto saluation: and make no further accounte but to bee Gospellers, at ease: if they can vanquish in disputation, to thinke they haue woone the fielde: no, no, they haue a heart which is heard to ouercome: they haue thornes which will not easily be destroyed: here lyeth the victorie and getting of the spurs: this man shall bee crowned because he hath willingly giuen vp him selfe to the power of Gods grace to purge his heart, and to make roome for the holy worde, that it may grow there alone, and not be ouershadowed and choaked.

Now let vs marke well that which is saide heere, both of the stonie and also of the thornie grounde, howe farre they proceede in professing Christ, and imbracing his Gospell: and wee shall plainely see, how greatly those carnall Gospellers which will not haue Faith to bee tryed by the fruites, are deceyued: Faith, Faith, (say they) is that which doth iustifie, it is true in deede, but not a fruitlesse faith: who soeuer beleeueth shall be saued: it is euen so, but not after euery kinde of beliefe: for then why shoulde not these two sortes of hearers bee saued, it is marueylous when the scripture is so euident, and our Sauiour Christ speaketh so plainely, that this grosse and doltish errour shoulde possesse the mindes of so many. But in deede it is a sweete doctrine, when a man may let loose the raines to all the lustes of the flesh, at the least thus farre, not to vexe and torment him selfe in subduing them, and yet by faith to bee saued. When Heauen and hell meete together, and God and the diuell bee reconciled, then shall these fleshly Epicures, and vaine proude men come to their happinesse. When

Christ

Christ shall denye that which he hath heere vttered, then shall these bee true beleeuers.

Let men therefore take heede that they bee not deceyued, nor made slacke in looking to the fruites of their faith and mortification of vaine fleshly lustes, through the prophane prating of such worldly bellie Gods: beleeue not them, but beleeue Iesus Christ who telleth you that it is not enough to heare the word, and to receiue it with ioy, and to let it grow in vs, vnlesse it bring forth reasonable and timely fruite in vs.

Againe, let vs marke how strong and inuincible an Argument may bee gathered out of this text against all contemners and dispisers of the worde, such as care not for hearing: these three sortes of hearers, are before them, and neerer to christianitie then they, and yet come short: therefore it must needes follow, that such ignorant Atheists, as neyther know, nor desire to know any thing aboue this worlde, are very farre from God, although they would seeme with their mouth and lips to draw neere vnto him. For if this

matter were well obserued, men woulde not regarde nor haue those men in estimation to bee good and honest, who are very dogges or swine, not regarding the pretious pearle of the Gospell, but readie to bark and bite at those which bring it. Let a man inquire thus, not of a few, but of the greatest part of men, howe say yee to such a man, what thinke yee of him? hee is (say they) a very good man, a good natured man, a gentle person, trustie to his friend, sure of his worde, and doth keepe as good house as any man of his calling in all this shire. But how is hee affected vnto Gods worde: is he zealous in religion? Nay surely, I did neuer heare that hee did deale that way, he is a very quyet man, no medler at al. O notable honest man, as deuoute in the lawes of God as the horse which hee rideth vpon, as carefull to haue Gods glory aduanced, as the swine in the sty, a great deale behinde these vnprofitable hearers, which are castawayes: and yet forsooth being very bruite beastes before God (in the state they bee in, yet vnlesse the Lorde call them to bee zealous of his glorye) they must bee reputed for the best men.

Our

Our fieldes are full of such Cattell as these, and if the Lorde do not put to his helping hand, our case is verie miserable. If any of those which were so zealous to heare, that they would to their hinderaunce in worldly matters leaue off their businesse, and follow preaching, as these which flocked to heare Christ, were yet neuertheless reiected, because they did not sincerely as they should: what shall wee say of those which will not step out at their doores, euen when they haue nothing to do, vnlesse it be to sit at cardes or tables. If such a man maye bee damned, as is moued with some delight, when hee heareth the worde preached: What shall we iudge of those woodden blockes and sottish men, who feele no more ioye in it then a post, when it is vttered vnto them? If there be some goe to destruction, which conforme themselues and haue a shewe of fruite by the worde: where shall those wretches appeare, whom the holy worde of God can not moue one whit, to reforme their disordered and beastly behauiours. I neede not to stande to inueigh out of this place against those

hellhounds, which dare open their mouthes to reproch and slaunder the setting forth of the Gospell. The Lorde diminish the number of them.

The last kinde of grounde, are the good hearers, which doe not onely receiue the séede, but also bring forth the fruites thereof. Although not euerie one alike or in the same measure, for some bring foorth an hundreth folde, some sixtie folde, some thirtie folde, according to the measure of Gods graces in them.

Although heere bee great ods in bringing forth the fruites, yet they bee all accepted and accompted for good grounde, true Christians, and sincere professors of godlinesse: now as wee bee taught heere that it is required of all to bee doers, as S. Iames saith, and not hearers only, cha. 1. ver. 22. so are we also taught, not to despise or rashly to condemne those, whiche doe not bring forth so great a measure of fruite as others doe: True it is, as Christ saith, herein is my father glorified, that yée bring forth much fruite. Iohn 15. 8. But it is also as true which hee saith in the seconde verse of the same chapter, Euery

uerie braunch that bringeth forth fruite, hee purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruite. Then to bring forth most, is most of all to bee desired, that God maye haue the greatest glorie: to bring foorth the least is not to bee condemned, because the Lord in time dooth purge them, and make them more fruitfull. I nede not to stand heere for to handle many thinges, or to make large exposition, the matter is exceeding plaine, there is no more but this, that all our care in hearing and professing the Gospell, be to receiue it into good ground, and to bring forth the fruits thereof. What should I stand to rip vp the shamefull abuse in the contrarie, to vtter how many euill fruites there bee in many which are Gospellers. This shoulde bee but as it were to light a candle in the cleare Sun shine, for all men do see them. I do not speake this, as though it should not bee good to crye out against them: but because the former things which I haue now vttered, do fully disclose them. And therefore I will heere ende, desiring the Lord to write these things in our hearts, which wee haue heard with our outward

fures, and to make vs good ground, to re-
ceiue the heauenly ſéede, and to bring forth
fruites of the ſame, that glorifying him
in this worlde, wée may be glorified
of him in the worlde to come,
through Jeſus Chriſt
our Lorde.
Amen.

FINIS.

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(Galatians vi. 14.)

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